

How Did We Get So Lucky? Recognizing All The Volunteers Who Make Your Chapter Run



Spring begins Thursday, March 20, 2026, at 10:46am ET. Depending on the part of the country you live in, you could be excited for this transition after a winter of snow and cold. Wherever you are, spring is historically seen as a season of renewal and community.



Your volunteers — both board members and those who develop and execute all of your well-run offerings and activities — are a crucial part of your chapter community, and the reason you meet your chapter mission as well as you do. And you are able to offer benefits and activities that keep members coming back. Knowing all they're responsible for, what kind of a job do you do thanking them for all their work on your networking, advocacy, website, events and more?

Spring is a great time to reflect on all your volunteers have accomplished in the current chapter year, to understand all they've done and to celebrate them. Here are a few ideas for highlighting their hard work and how the chapter and showcase how the larger community continues to benefit.

Recognize the people behind the work. It's important that everyone in your chapter and your larger community understand how much time and energy volunteers put into running your chapter. Recognize all they need to shift around in their lives to fit in chapter work. This could mean getting home late for dinner, taking chapter work on vacation or using a work lunch break to do something for the chapter. Everyone needs to understand just how much volunteers do to make your chapter run



smoothly, and how much you appreciate them for all that work. And how the chapter would probably stop operating without them.

Highlight the different people required to make it all possible. Acknowledge that there are a range of different volunteer “types” — e.g., new, long-term, behind-the-scenes, board and committee leadership — in ways that make each group and person feel like you’re speaking directly to them. For some chapter projects, like website management or bookkeeping, volunteers may need to learn new skills to be able to do the job, and other tasks, like event registration, require being in-person and having a friendly attitude. Share that you hope that all of your volunteers are in roles that are the best fit for them, but you’re aware that some of your volunteers may be completing tasks they may not have initially been qualified for, or enjoy doing.

Show the impact of their work. Sharing the impact of the work done by your volunteers can help everyone see just how important all chapter volunteers are, regardless of the size of their role. Review specific outcomes from your current chapter year that were possible because of your volunteers. Find data around chapter activities like the total number of events held, outreach calls made and milestones surpassed, to highlight how the teamwork and collaboration of your volunteers allowed your chapter to better meet its mission and vision. And share that information with volunteers as well as the chapter, and your other audiences, like vendors and sponsors, who may not realize the people they work with are all volunteers.

Gratitude in action

Since everyone craves a different type of praise — verbal versus written, private versus public, etc. — and everyone responds to praise differently, use different tactics to share your thanks. Include real stories of the positive impacts on the different audiences and the larger community. Collect quotes as people are leaving a conference. Was there something they truly enjoyed or will remember? Survey those who’ve used your job board to learn how it’s helped them or their company.

Call out these chapter lifesavers by name and activity in quotes or testimonials, in print or video, and share them, in board meetings and committee meetings, as well as at events, on social media and on your website. And send thank yous throughout the year from your chapter leadership that include some of this information.



Some volunteers are going to want more than to hear their names called out at a meeting or see their name in your newsletter or on your website. For people like these, you'll need to look for additional ways to thank them that better resonate with them. Ideas we like include holding volunteer-only events or giving each a plaque or a small gift, like a piece of chapter swag.

Many of your members don't think about all the work done by volunteers that goes into running your chapter. They just assume that the website "works" when they need it to and the money you need to operate is available. So, it's always important to emphasize all the people behind EVERYTHING that goes on in your chapter.

Talk about how everyone who volunteers, no matter how big or how small their task, plays a role in the chapter's success. And how everyone benefits thanks to your chapter volunteers. The monthly educational sessions that wouldn't happen without volunteers? Share. The job board that stays current thanks to behind-the-scenes help? Share.

When your members see all your volunteers are responsible for and how much your chapter values its volunteers, they'll be much more appreciative and may also see opportunities to jump in and help themselves.

How did we get so lucky?

Association chapters succeed through the hard work and dedication of all their volunteers. To ensure the trend continues, it's important to thank your volunteers throughout the year. Just as important is asking them for input on your chapter volunteer program. What do they think is running well and where do they see gaps. Perhaps they'll reinforce what you already know, or maybe they'll highlight holes in your volunteer program or other places in the chapter that you weren't aware of. As long as they know how much you and the community appreciate all they do, luck will remain on your side.

